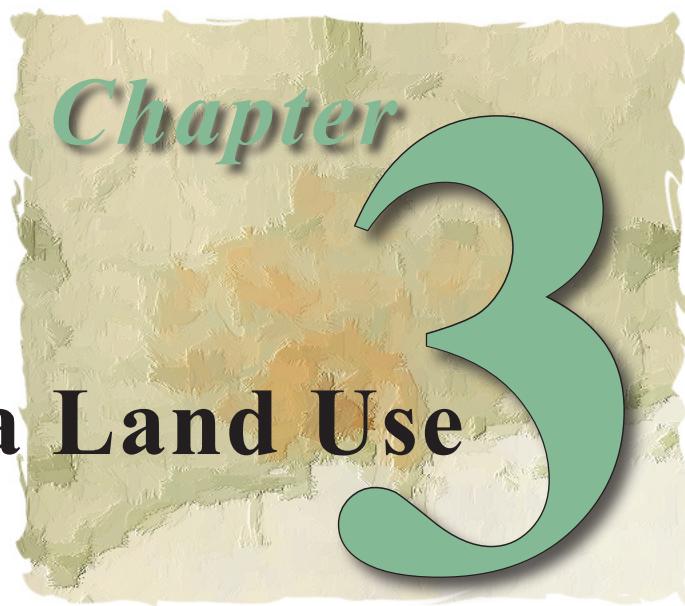


Conducting a Land Use Inventory



Included in this chapter:

- Determining Current Land Use Conditions
- Preparing a Base Map
- Deciding on Land Use Categories
- Collecting Current Land Use Data
- Preparing the Current Land Use Map

Introduction

What is a land use inventory and what role does it play in comprehensive planning?

A land use inventory is a database of the lands and their uses within your community including both developed and undeveloped land.

An evaluation of current land use conditions is necessary in preparing the land use element. Evaluating the current land use patterns, densities and relationships will assist you in determining land available to meet your community's future land use needs.

Determining Current Land Use Conditions

No community is a blank slate. A comprehensive plan requires an understanding of current conditions as well as the community's place within the larger regional setting. Moreover, the goals and policies of a comprehensive plan are greatly affected by current land uses and development patterns that may be more or less resistant to change.

An inventory of current land uses in the community is an important first step. It is

Chapter 3 – Conducting a Land Use Inventory

important to find out if a land use inventory for your community or GIS layers that could be used for this task are available from an agency within your community, such as the engineering office or your county or regional planning commission. The information gathered in this step is used to produce a map of current uses by amount and type (e.g., residential, commercial, institutional). Typical methods for determining current land use involve windshield (conducted from a vehicle) and walking surveys. A windshield survey is useful for large areas such as rural or suburban areas. In an urban area, where land uses are more dense a walking survey may be best. Surveys may be supplemented by aerial photo interpretation, assessment records from your local assessor and field checks. Aerial photos can also provide building footprints and assist in locating other landscape features. In addition web resources, such as WISCLAND (DNR) can be useful for rural areas.

Many times, general land use descriptions such as “commercial” are used to describe a range of activities that may vary significantly in terms of overall character and intensity of use. This guide recommends using a more detailed land use classification system that more closely reflects the actual function and character of various land use types. This will also serve as a useful prelude to helping define your community’s desired mix and intensities of land uses. The inventory is an important first step to producing a color map of your community’s current land use showing its locations and relationships between all land use types.

The Land Cover Data (WISCLAND) site can provide a starting point for collecting useful data for a rural community: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/maps/gis/datalandcover.html>
Regional planning commissions are another source for information and for more specific land use categories.

A further refinement of the inventory might be the creation of a buildable lands inventory, which includes only land that is available for development. Land that is vacant and has no other physical restrictions, such as topography or wetlands, would be identified. This inventory will give you a more accurate idea of how much land your community has for development.

TIP: An inventory of current land uses should be detailed enough to closely represent actual conditions.

When calculating the amount of land in an inventory, it can be stated as gross acres, which includes the sum of the parcels in the inventory, or as net acres, which subtracts land that will be used for support services, such as street rights-of-way. It is important to be consistent whether your inventory is based on gross or net figures.

Preparing a Base Map

One of the essential first steps of any planning project will be compiling current mapping data from the town, village, city, county, regional planning commission (RPC) and other state and federal sources, as necessary. This data will be used to produce a base map for the comprehensive plan, which in turn will be used to produce maps for the individual plan elements.

Your community’s needs, goals and objectives should define the base information

Table 2
Types of Land Use Classification Systems

- Land-Based Classification Standards - American Planning Association
- Real Estate Classes for Assessment - Wisconsin Department of Revenue
- Standard Land Use Coding Manual (SLUCM) - Federal Highway Administration and Department of Housing
- Standard Industrial Code / North American Industrial Classification System (SIC/NAICS)
- Land Use and Land Cover Classification System- USGS
- Land Use Codes – Wisconsin’s Regional Planning Commissions
- County-created system

that is collected. The base information is mapped to provide an understanding of the current land patterns. The maps should show vacant lands, lands suitable for redevelopment and committed or already developed lands. You may want to highlight land uses that attract economic growth, such as commercial centers or industrial parks. Maps indicating property lines are also useful. Ownership information can also be useful and will allow you to notify property owners affected by the plan. To obtain ownership information contact the county assessor’s office or planning department.

Deciding on Land Use Categories

Before creating your current land use map, a land classification system should be selected. Table 2 lists commonly utilized land use classification systems. Appendix C contains the color codes for Activity and Function as defined by the Land-Based Classification Standards Project from the American Planning Association.

When determining your community’s land classification system consult with your county’s planning office or land information office for assistance. Listed in Table 3 are two examples of land use categories.

Table 3
Two Classification Systems Broken Down by Category

American Planning Association	Wisconsin Department of Revenue
Residence or accommodation	Residential
General sales or services	Commercial
Manufacturing and wholesale trade	Manufacturing
Transportation, communication, information and utilities	Agricultural
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	Undeveloped
Education, public administration, health care, etc.	Agricultural forest
Construction-related businesses	Forest
Mining and extraction establishments	Other
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	

Collecting Current Land Use Data

Data collection is like a scavenger hunt. You decide what information is needed to develop your plan and then collect it. As you begin to look you may find other sources or types of data that are helpful to the planning process.

Data and information for the land use element is available from local, county, state, and federal government. Data may also be available from other locations such as private companies, libraries, school and utility districts. For example, demographic data is available from the federal census. Construction and housing data is available from building permits found at the local or county level. Analyzing the data you collect will help you determine your future land use needs.

Managing time and resources requires attention to the amount of data collected and organized. Sufficient data is necessary to ensure accuracy and accountability.

Additional information on land data can be found in the Directory of Resources for Comprehensive Planning in Wisconsin at www.doa.state.wi.us.

Preparing the Current Land Use Map

Maps are one of the most dramatic displays of land use information. By conveying substantial amounts of information at a single glance, maps play a central role in the development and presentation of any plan. They provide a visual exhibit to citizens of the collected data and assist in the

interpretation of that data. The current land use map is used extensively throughout the planning process and will serve as the basis of comparison for land use alternatives that the community considers.

Figures 4 and 5 on pages 23 and 24 show two examples of current land use maps. The first is an example of a current urban land use map and the second is a rural town's map example.

Once a classification system is determined a current land use map is drafted based on the information collected. When drafting a map, it is best to use conventional colors. For example water features are designated blue, forests are designated green, and industrial uses are designated purple. Keep in mind that a current land use map is not a zoning map.

An existing land use map is not a zoning map!

A separate zoning map may be drafted and used as a primary tool for implementing the community's comprehensive plan. Zoning maps will be discussed further in Chapter 8 – Implementation Tools.

It is also important to distinguish between land use and land cover. Land cover is defined as the observed physical cover on the earth's surface. Land use is defined by the activities of people within a land cover type. The definition of land use then establishes a direct link between land cover and the actions of people in their environment. The following examples illustrate both definitions:

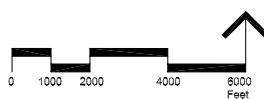
A land cover term is “grassland”, while “rangeland” or “tennis court” refers to the

use of a grass cover. “Recreation area” is a land use term that may apply to different land cover types, such as a beach, park or woodlands.

Chapter 4 of the guide lays out eleven different analysis techniques that can be used to help prepare the future land use map.

EXISTING LAND USE 2003

ONE, TWO, THREE FAMILY	990 Ac	11%
MULTI FAMILY	10 Ac	<1%
MOBILE HOME	40 Ac	<1%
COMMERCIAL	230 Ac	2%
INDUSTRIAL	370 Ac	4%
PUBLIC / INSTITUTIONAL	370 Ac	4%
UTILITIES	100 Ac	1%
RECREATION	460 Ac	5%
VACANT, OPEN, AG.	4,950 Ac	55%
AIRPORT	420 Ac	4%
OTHER TRANSPORTATION	1,285 Ac	14%
PERCEIVED WETLANDS		
	8,920 Ac 100%	

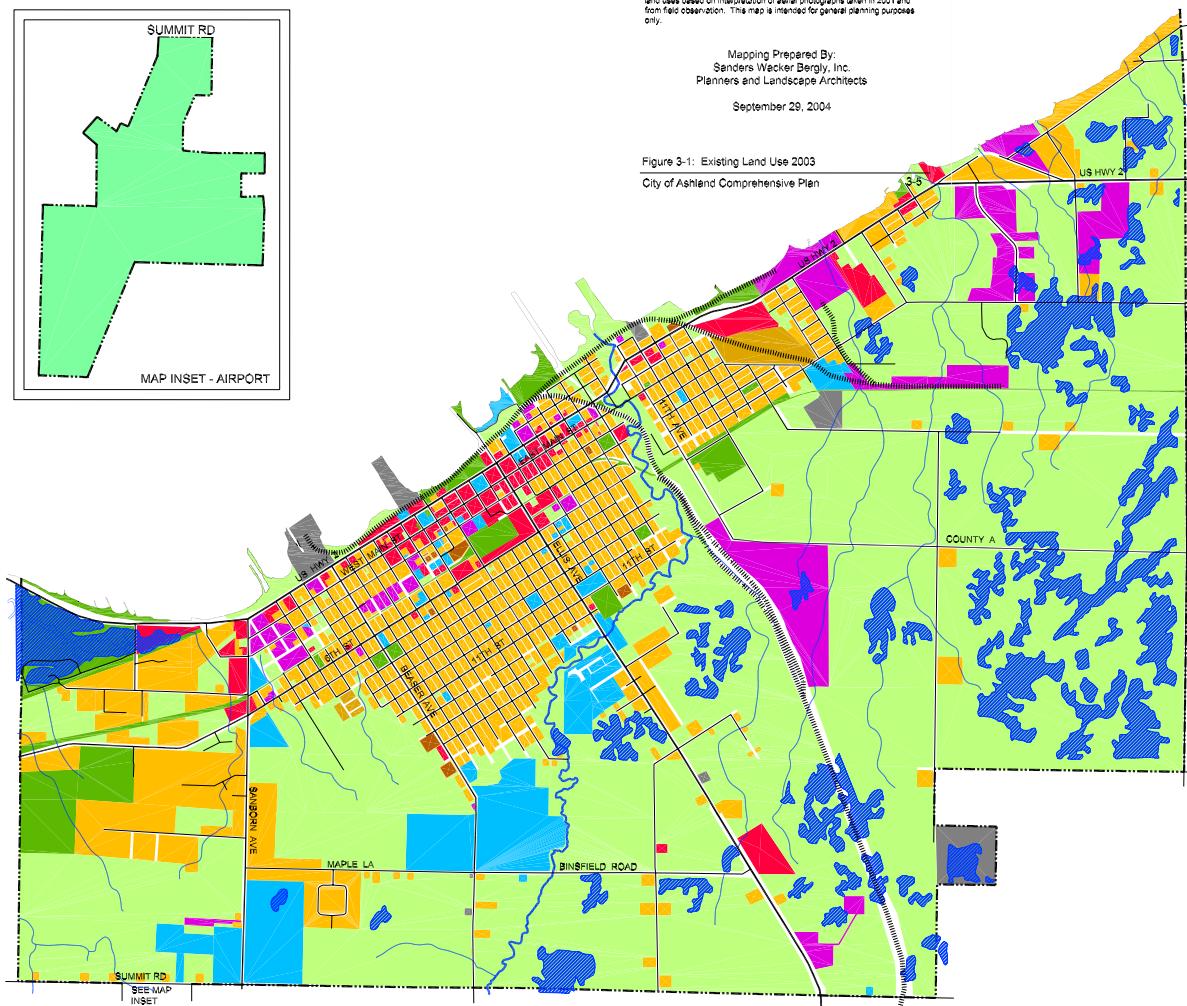


Digital base map obtained from the City of Ashland in April 2002. Existing land use data is based on interpretation of aerial photographs taken in 2001 and from field observation. This map is intended for general planning purposes only.

Mapping Prepared By:
Sanders Wecker Bergly, Inc.
Planners and Landscape Architects

September 29, 2004

Figure 3-1: Existing Land Use 2003
City of Ashland Comprehensive Plan



Chapter 3 – Conducting a Land Use Inventory

Figure 5
Example of Current Land Use Map for the Town of Harrison, Wisconsin

